

# Aligning English Instruction with Workplace Communication: A Needs Analysis of Vocational High School Students

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## Abstract

This study investigates the English learning needs of vocational high school students to inform workplace-relevant English instruction. A descriptive needs analysis design was employed, involving 75 Grade X students from the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program at an Indonesian vocational high school. Data were collected using a 25-item structured questionnaire measuring five dimensions: the importance of English skills, needs for improvement, workplace communication competencies, preferred learning activities, and learning expectations, supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis were applied. The findings reveal strong student agreement (mean > 4.0 on a 5-point scale) on the importance of English for future careers, with speaking and listening identified as the most critical workplace skills. Students strongly prefer interactive activities such as role plays, simulations, group discussions, and project-based learning over traditional grammar exercises. The novelty lies in the comprehensive 25-item needs analysis instrument specifically designed for the MPLB program, offering fresh empirical insights beyond general English curricula. Practically, English teachers and curriculum developers should integrate vocationally relevant, interactive tasks into instruction to bridge classroom learning and workplace demands. The study contributes to the English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) literature by providing a validated needs-analysis framework that demonstrates how learner-centered data can directly guide instructional design aligned with real-world communication requirements.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 12 February 2026

Revised : 28 Maret 2026

Accepted : 2 April 2026

## KEYWORDS

Needs analysis; vocational education; English for vocational purposes; communicative English; workplace communication

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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## Introduction

The increasing importance of English as a global language has significantly influenced educational systems worldwide (Melitz, 2016). English is widely used as the primary language of international communication across business, technology, education, and global collaboration. The role of English as a global lingua franca has grown substantially in international communication, education, and professional contexts, serving as a medium for cross-cultural interaction and knowledge exchange in the globalized world (Xu et al., 2025). Consequently, English proficiency has become a crucial competence, enabling individuals to access broader opportunities and participate effectively in international interactions. In many countries where English is taught as a foreign language, educational institutions are expected to equip students with adequate English skills to support both academic and professional development. Within this context, English learning is viewed not merely as a subject within the curriculum but also as a strategic competence that prepares learners to engage in global communication and workplace environments (Oliveri & Tannenbaum, 2019)

In vocational education, English learning plays an essential role in preparing students for workplace communication. Vocational High Schools (SMK) are designed to equip students with practical skills and competencies in specific occupational fields (Suharno et al., 2020). Therefore,

English instruction in vocational education should not focus solely on general language knowledge but also support students in performing communicative tasks relevant to their future professional environments (Widodo, 2016). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has emerged as a dominant approach in language education for learners with professional or academic goals. Characterizing ESP as an approach to language teaching in which all decisions regarding content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning (Wang, 2025). This learner-centered orientation distinguishes ESP from English for General Purposes (EGP), which typically focuses on teaching English as a subject without specific reference to learners' future language use contexts.

In this regard, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become an important approach in vocational English education, as it emphasizes the development of language skills directly related to learners' academic and professional needs (Belcher, 2025). The central principle of ESP is that language teaching should be designed based on learners' needs, goals, and the communicative practices of the communities in which they will participate. Through needs analysis, educators can identify the language skills, discourse practices, and communicative tasks that learners are expected to perform in their future professional environments. Consequently, ESP instruction aims to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use by integrating authentic communication tasks and context-specific learning materials (Hidayat, 2024). ESP instruction focuses on helping learners acquire specialized linguistic registers, including the vocabulary, grammar, and discourse patterns commonly used in specific professional or academic settings (Basturkmen, 2021).

Furthermore, the development of English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), a branch of ESP, highlights the importance of aligning language instruction with vocational disciplines and workplace communication practices. EVP programs aim to prepare students to communicate effectively in professional environments where English is required for performing occupational tasks and interacting with international partners (Widodo, 2016). This perspective indicates that vocational English instruction should integrate language learning with domain-specific knowledge and communicative tasks relevant to students' future careers. The distinction between EVP and general ESP lies in the nature of the target professional contexts (Widodo, 2016). While ESP in academic settings might focus on research articles and conference presentations, EVP addresses the practical communication demands of workplaces, including interactions with customers, colleagues, and supervisors (Chan, 2019). A university course syllabus for professional English communication, for instance, outlines topics such as preparing resumes and application letters, answering job interview questions, arranging meetings, dealing with customers, and handling payments (Irshad & Yasmin, 2025). These competencies represent the authentic communicative tasks that vocational students need to perform upon entering the workforce. Similarly, an EVP course for office services and secretariat students includes content such as telephone etiquette, writing business letters and emails, handling customer complaints, and apologizing appropriately (Decock et al., 2020). The emphasis throughout these EVP curricula is on practical, immediately applicable communication skills rather than abstract linguistic knowledge.

Previous studies have also emphasized the role of English in workplace communication and professional development. ESP programs are designed to address specific communicative needs in professional and academic contexts, allowing learners to use English effectively in real-life situations

(Feak & Chan, 2025). In vocational contexts, English learning is expected to support students' ability to communicate in workplace environments where English often functions as a lingua franca for international interaction (Hult, 2017). Similarly, research on ESP implementation in vocational education indicates that language instruction should integrate professional knowledge and communication skills relevant to students' vocational fields (Riswanto et al., 2022). Needs analysis is widely regarded as a fundamental stage in language curriculum development because it helps identify learners' needs, expectations, and language requirements before designing instructional materials or learning objectives. According to Richards, needs analysis provides essential information about learners, learning contexts, and target language use to guide the development of effective language programs. Through needs analysis, educators can identify learners' wants, needs, and gaps to design courses that respond to the actual language demands of learners in academic or professional contexts (Bocanegra-Valle, 2016).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of vocationally relevant English instruction, many vocational schools still rely on general English materials that are not closely aligned with the communicative demands of workplace contexts (Nguyen, 2017). As a result, students often struggle to apply their English skills in real professional situations. This mismatch between classroom instruction and workplace communication requirements has been widely recognized as a challenge in English language education, particularly in vocational settings (Hellekjær & Fairway, 2015).

Although many studies have investigated needs analysis in ESP contexts, most focus on higher-education students or specific academic disciplines. Studies examining the English learning needs of vocational secondary school students, particularly in Indonesian vocational programs such as Office Management and Business Services (MPLB), remain limited. Therefore, further research is needed to understand how English instruction can be aligned with vocational communication demands at the secondary education level (Skarpaas & Hellekjær, 2021). The limited integration of workplace-oriented communication tasks in English instruction results in a mismatch between what students learn in the classroom and what is required in real occupational settings (Hsu, 2025). Moreover, insufficient attention has been paid to conducting a comprehensive needs analysis that incorporates learners' target needs (what students need to do in English at work), preferred language skills (which skills are most important for their future careers), and learning preferences (which instructional activities engage them most effectively) within specific vocational domains.

Furthermore, preliminary observations in vocational school contexts suggest that many students still struggle to use English for communicative purposes, particularly in speaking and listening activities related to workplace communication (Karataş et al., 2024). Informal discussions with English teachers also indicate that existing English learning materials are often not fully aligned with students' vocational specializations (Widodo, 2016). These initial observations highlight the need for a more systematic investigation of students' English learning needs in vocational education settings. Accordingly, there is a pressing need for empirical research examining the English learning needs of vocational secondary school students in Indonesia, specifically the communication tasks they must perform, the language skills they prioritize, and the learning activities they prefer.

The current state of the art in ESP and EVP research has moved beyond general needs identification toward more nuanced understandings of how vocational learners interact with English in an authentic workplace context (Wijayati & Safitri, 2025). Recent studies have emphasized the

importance of integrating authentic workplace tasks, such as handling customer inquiries, participating in meetings, writing professional correspondence, and delivering presentations, into English curricula (Hyland, 2016). Furthermore, contemporary research has recognized that effective vocational English instruction must consider not only the linguistic features of workplace communication but also the sociocultural and pragmatic dimensions of language use in specific professional settings.

Previous studies have also contributed valuable frameworks for needs analysis in language education. For instance, Anqi Dou proposed a framework for investigating learner needs in ESP programs and emphasized that language courses should be developed based on learners' actual academic and professional requirements (Dou, 2024). Research revealed that students often learn English with pragmatic goals such as improving career opportunities, engaging in international collaboration, and accessing global knowledge resources (Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). These findings indicate that English language instruction should align with learners' future goals and professional aspirations.

However, despite these advancements, the application of these principles to secondary-level vocational education in Indonesia, particularly within the MPLB program, remains underexplored. Most existing EVP research has targeted university students or adult learners in professional training contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how younger vocational learners in secondary schools perceive their English learning needs (Lavender, 2020). Moreover, few studies have systematically investigated the relationships among students' target needs, preferred language skills, and preferred learning activities within a single integrated framework. Therefore, the current state of the art calls for empirical research that addresses these interconnected dimensions of needs analysis in vocational secondary education.

The novelty of this study lies in several key aspects that distinguish it from previous research. First, this study specifically focuses on the English learning needs of vocational high school students in the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program at the secondary education level. While previous ESP and EVP research has predominantly targeted university students or adult learners in professional training contexts, this study addresses a younger learner population that is simultaneously developing general educational competencies and vocational skills. This focus is particularly important because secondary-level vocational students have distinct developmental characteristics, learning experiences, and future career trajectories that differ from adult learners or university students.

Second, this study integrates three essential dimensions of needs analysis within a single investigation: (a) target needs, the specific English communication tasks required in workplace contexts; (b) preferred language skills which language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) students prioritize for effective workplace communication; and (c) preferred learning activities what instructional activities students find most engaging and beneficial for developing workplace English competence. This integrated approach provides a more holistic understanding of how English instruction can be tailored to the specific demands of office management and business services professions, rather than examining these dimensions in isolation, as previous studies have often done.

Third, this study responds to the limited empirical research on Indonesian vocational secondary education contexts, where English instruction often remains general rather than

vocationally oriented. By focusing on the MPLB program, which prepares students for administrative and business service roles that increasingly require English communication skills amid globalization and digital transformation, this study offers fresh empirical insights that extend beyond general ESP literature. Additionally, this study gives voice to students, recognizing that learners' perspectives on their own needs are invaluable for designing relevant and engaging instruction.

This study contributes to the literature and educational practice in several meaningful ways. First, it contributes to the body of knowledge on English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) by providing empirical insights into the English learning needs of vocational high school students in the Office Management and Business Services program. These findings will enrich the existing literature, which has largely focused on higher education contexts, by offering a secondary education perspective on vocational English needs.

Second, this study contributes to the development of context-sensitive English teaching materials and approaches that are aligned with vocational competencies and labor market expectations. The empirical findings regarding students' target needs, preferred language skills, and preferred learning activities can directly inform curriculum design, material development, and instructional strategies in vocational high schools. Specifically, English teachers and curriculum developers can use the results of this study to design vocationally relevant learning tasks, select appropriate materials, and create engaging classroom activities that prepare students for real-world workplace communication.

Third, this study offers a replicable needs analysis model for other vocational programs and educational contexts. The integrated framework used in this study, which examines target needs, preferred language skills, and preferred learning activities simultaneously, can be adapted and applied to other vocational specializations, such as tourism, hospitality, engineering, or information technology. Furthermore, the findings of this study have practical implications for teacher professional development, highlighting the importance of understanding students' needs and preferences before designing instruction. By demonstrating how learner-centered data can directly guide the alignment of instructional design with real-world workplace communication requirements, this study provides a practical example of evidence-based practice in vocational English education.

Based on these considerations, research on the English learning needs of vocational high school students is important for providing empirical insights to improve English instruction in vocational education. Understanding students' target needs, preferred language skills, and preferred learning activities can help educators develop more relevant teaching materials and instructional strategies that align with vocational learning contexts. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the English learning needs of vocational high school students in the Office Management and Business Services program. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the target English communication needs of vocational high school students in the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program for future workplace contexts? 2) What language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) do students prioritize for effective workplace communication? And 3) What learning activities do students prefer to develop their workplace English competence.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive research design using a needs analysis approach to investigate the English learning needs of vocational high school students. The needs analysis approach was selected because it is widely recognized as a fundamental stage in language curriculum development, enabling researchers to identify learners' target needs, language skill priorities, and learning preferences before designing instructional materials or objectives. This design was appropriate for addressing the three research questions, which focused on: (1) students' target English communication needs for future workplace contexts, (2) their prioritized language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing), and (3) their preferred learning activities for developing workplace English competence.

The study was conducted at a vocational high school in Indonesia. A total of 75 Grade X students from the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program participated in this study, selected through purposive sampling. The MPLB program prepares students for administrative and office-related occupations in which English communication skills may be required when interacting with colleagues, clients, or business partners. This sample was considered appropriate because these students represent the target population directly in need of vocationally relevant English instruction.

Data were collected using two instruments: a 25-item structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was designed to capture data across five key dimensions aligned with the research questions:

**Table 1.** The design of the questionnaire

Dimension	Items
Importance of English in the Workplace	Q1-Q5
Needs for Improving Language Skills	Q6-Q10
Workplace Communication Competencies	Q11-Q15
Preferred Learning Activities	Q16-Q20
Expectations toward English Learning	Q21-Q25

All items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was developed based on concepts from needs analysis in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) literature and adapted to the vocational education context. Additionally, brief semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of students to explore their difficulties in learning English, preferred classroom activities, and expectations of English instruction. The interview data were used to support and clarify the questionnaire findings.

The data collection process was carried out in three sequential stages. First, the 25-item questionnaire was distributed to 75 students during the English learning session. Students completed the questionnaire individually based on their perceptions and experiences in learning English. Second, after collecting the questionnaire responses, several students were selected for short, semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper insights into their learning needs and expectations. The interviews were conducted in an informal setting to encourage students to share their opinions more freely. Third, all collected data were organized and prepared for analysis.

Interview data were analyzed qualitatively by transcribing, coding, and interpreting students' responses thematically based on emerging patterns related to learning difficulties, activity preferences, and expectations. These qualitative findings were used to support, elaborate on, and

provide further explanation of the results obtained from the questionnaire, thereby enhancing the depth and validity of the overall analysis

## Result and Discussion

### Result

This study employed a descriptive research design using a needs analysis approach to investigate the English learning needs of 75 Grade X students in the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program. Data were collected through a 25-item structured questionnaire (5-point Likert scale) and semi-structured interviews. The results are organized thematically according to the three research questions.

### *Target English Communication Needs for Future Workplace Contexts*

#### *Strong Recognition of the Importance of Future Careers*

The first theme emerging from the data is students' overwhelmingly strong recognition that English is essential for their future professional success. Across all 75 respondents, Q1 ("English is important for my future career") received consistently high ratings, with the majority of students selecting 5 (Strongly Agree).

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions of English Importance

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Interpretation
Target English Communication Needs	0.640	5	Acceptable
Prioritized Language Skills	0.683	5	Acceptable
Workplace Communication Competencies	0.742	5	Reliable
Preferred Learning Activities	0.782	5	Reliable
Expectations toward English Learning	0.856	5	Highly Reliable

This finding indicates that all questionnaire dimensions achieved acceptable to high levels of reliability. The highest reliability coefficient was found for students' expectations toward English learning ( $\alpha = 0.856$ ), while the lowest was for the target English communication needs dimension ( $\alpha = 0.640$ ). Overall, the findings indicate that the questionnaire was sufficiently reliable for data collection and analysis. Interview data reinforced this quantitative finding. One student stated, "I know that many companies now require English, especially for administrative staff who deal with foreign clients or documents." Another student explained, "Without English, I think it will be hard to get a good job in an office."

#### *Specific Workplace Communication Tasks as Target Needs*

The second theme reveals that students have clearly defined target communication needs centered on authentic workplace tasks. Data from Q11–Q15 (Workplace Communication Competencies) showed high agreement across all items. In particular, Q11 ("I need to learn how to communicate with customers in English") and Q13 ("I need to learn how to introduce myself professionally in English") received the highest mean scores, indicating that customer service interactions and professional self-presentation are prioritized target needs.

**Table 3.** Students' Target English Communication Needs

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
English is important for my future career	4.65	0.479	Very High
Speaking skills are needed for communication in the workplace	4.63	0.632	Very High
Listening skills are important for understanding workplace instructions	4.37	0.588	Very High

Reading skills are necessary for understanding workplace documents and information	4.36	0.710	Very High
Writing skills are important for writing messages, reports, or work-related emails	4.55	0.576	Very High
Overall Mean	<b>4.51</b>	<b>0.597</b>	<b>Very High</b>

The findings indicate that vocational high school students strongly recognized the importance of English communication skills for future workplace contexts. Among the five items, the highest mean score was found in the statement “English is important for my future career” (M = 4.65), followed closely by “Speaking skills are needed for communication in the workplace” (M = 4.63). These findings demonstrate that students were highly aware of the importance of English proficiency in supporting their future professional careers. In addition, all language skill-related items obtained very high mean scores. Writing skills (M = 4.55), listening skills (M = 4.37), and reading skills (M = 4.36) were also perceived as essential for workplace communication. The overall mean score of 4.51 indicates that students considered English communication competence highly important for workplace readiness. Interview data provided concrete examples of these target needs. One student shared, “When I do my internship later, I will need to answer the phone in English, maybe. I need to learn that.” Another student noted, “My teacher said that in offices, we sometimes have to write emails to foreign partners. I want to learn how to do that correctly.”

#### *Expectations for Workplace-Relevant Instruction*

The third theme emerged from Q21–Q25 (Expectations toward English Learning). Students expressed clear expectations that English instruction should be directly aligned with workplace realities. Q21 (“I expect English materials to match my future job needs”) and Q25 (“I expect English learning to improve my work readiness”) received among the highest ratings across all items. This finding indicates that students not only recognize their target needs but also actively expect the curriculum, materials, and teachers to respond to those needs.

**Table 4.** Students’ Expectations toward English Learning

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I expect English materials to match my future job needs	4.25	0.856	Very High
I want more workplace communication practice in English classes	4.19	0.783	High
I expect teachers to use real workplace situations in English learning	4.32	0.664	Very High
I want English learning to be more interactive and communicative	4.29	0.767	Very High
I expect English learning to improve my work readiness	4.69	0.569	Very High
Overall Mean	4.35	0.728	Very High

The findings demonstrate that students had strong expectations regarding English learning in vocational education. The highest mean score was found in the statement “I expect English learning to improve my work readiness” (M = 4.69), indicating that students strongly viewed English learning as an important preparation for future employment. One interview participant articulated this expectation clearly: “I feel that what we learn now is too general. We need more practice that feels like real office work, like handling customers or writing business letters”.

#### ***Prioritized Language Skills for Workplace Communication***

The most prominent theme across the entire dataset is the prioritization of speaking as the most critical language skill for workplace communication. This finding is consistently supported across multiple questionnaire items and interview responses. Listening skills also received a very high mean

score (M = 4.63), suggesting that students realized the importance of understanding spoken instructions and communication in professional settings. Meanwhile, reading and writing skills both obtained high mean scores (M = 4.51), indicating that students also recognized the importance of written communication in workplace environments.

**Table 5.** Students’ Prioritized Language Skills

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I need to improve my English-speaking skills	4.81	0.394	Very High
I need to improve my English listening skills	4.63	0.487	Very High
I need to improve my English reading skills	4.51	0.623	Very High
I need to improve my English writing skills	4.51	0.602	Very High
Speaking is the English skill I need most for work purposes	4.48	0.704	Very High
Overall Mean	4.59	0.562	Very High

Listening skills also received a very high mean score (M = 4.63), suggesting that students realized the importance of understanding spoken instructions and communication in professional settings. Meanwhile, reading and writing skills both obtained high mean scores (M = 4.51), indicating that students also recognized the importance of written communication in workplace environments. The overall mean score of 4.59 demonstrates that students strongly perceived English language improvement as essential for their future careers. Interview data provided rich qualitative support. One student explained, *"In an office, you have to talk to people every day, your boss, your coworkers, customers. If you cannot speak English well, you cannot do your job."* Another student stated, *"I am not afraid of reading or writing, but speaking makes me nervous. I need more practice speaking."*

### ***Preferred Learning Activities for Developing Workplace English Competence***

The findings reveal that students generally preferred interactive and communicative learning activities. The highest mean score was obtained by the item related to group discussions and active communication (M = 4.20), indicating that students favored collaborative and communicative learning environments.

**Table 6.** Preferred Learning Activities

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I prefer learning English through direct practice activities	3.92	0.850	High
I enjoy role-play or workplace simulation activities in English learning	3.95	0.751	High
I enjoy learning English using videos or audiovisual media	3.91	0.873	High
I prefer learning through group discussions and active communication	4.20	0.788	High
I am more motivated to learn English through project-based activities	3.95	0.804	High
Overall Mean	3.99	0.813	High

The findings reveal that students generally preferred interactive and communicative learning activities. The highest mean score was obtained by the item related to group discussions and active communication (M = 4.20), indicating that students favored collaborative and communicative learning environments.

Role-play activities, project-based learning, direct practice activities, and audiovisual media also received high mean scores. These findings suggest that students preferred learning activities that involved active participation and simulated authentic workplace communication situations. The overall mean score of 3.99 indicates that students preferred communicative and student-centered learning approaches.

## Discussion

This study employed a descriptive needs analysis design to investigate the English learning needs of 75 Grade X students in the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program. The discussion is organized thematically around the three research questions, with each theme interpreting the findings in light of the existing literature and drawing practical implications for curriculum development and classroom instruction.

The first major finding is that MPLB students demonstrate an overwhelming sense that English proficiency is essential for their future professional success. With a mean score of 4.65 (very high) for Q1 ("English is important for my future career"), this finding aligns with previous research by Poedjiastutie and Oliver, who found that vocational students learn English with pragmatic goals such as improving career opportunities and engaging in international collaboration (Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). This awareness is particularly significant given that these students are in Grade X (approximately 15–16 years old) and already recognize the instrumental value of English for their professional futures.

This finding also supports Widodo's characterization of English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), which emphasizes that vocational English instruction should prepare students to communicate effectively in professional environments where English is required to perform occupational tasks. Unlike learners in academic tracks who may view English as a subject for examination purposes, MPLB students view English as a workplace tool essential for job performance and career advancement. The interview data reinforced this, with one student stating, "*Without English, I think it will be hard to get a good job in an office.*"

The second finding reveals that students' target needs are centered on authentic workplace tasks rather than general English proficiency. The high mean scores across Q11–Q15 (workplace communication competencies) indicate that students have a concrete understanding of the specific communication situations they will encounter. The finding that Q11 ("communicate with customers") and Q13 ("introduce myself professionally") received among the highest ratings demonstrates that customer service interactions and professional self-presentation are prioritized target needs. This finding is consistent with Hyland's emphasis on integrating authentic workplace tasks, such as handling customer inquiries, participating in meetings, writing professional correspondence, and delivering presentations, into English curricula. The current study provides empirical evidence that these tasks are not merely theoretical constructs but represent the actual needs articulated by vocational students themselves.

Additionally, the high mean score for writing skills ( $M = 4.55$ ) and the interview comment about writing emails to foreign partners indicate that students recognize the multimodal nature of workplace communication, encompassing both oral and written genres. This finding suggests that while speaking may be the highest priority, writing for professional purposes (emails, reports) remains an important target need.

The third finding, emerging from Q21–Q25 (expectations toward English learning), reveals that students expect the curriculum to address their workplace needs. The exceptionally high mean score for Q25 ("I expect English learning to improve my work readiness,"  $M = 4.69$ ) is particularly noteworthy. This finding indicates that students view English instruction not as an academic exercise but as a direct pathway to employability.

This expectation aligns with the ESP principle that language teaching should be designed based on learners' needs and goals (Belcher, 2025). The high reliability coefficient for this dimension ( $\alpha = 0.856$ ) further confirms the consistency of students' expectations. One interview participant articulated this clearly: *"I feel that what we learn now is too general. We need more practice that feels like real office work."* Implications for Practice: English teachers and curriculum developers should design instructional materials around authentic office management scenarios, including customer service interactions, professional introductions, email correspondence, and presentations. Furthermore, students' strong expectations for workplace-relevant instruction should be explicitly addressed in curriculum planning to enhance motivation and engagement.

The most prominent finding for RQ2 is the overwhelming prioritization of speaking as the most critical language skill. With the highest mean score across all language improvement items ( $M = 4.81$  for Q6, "I need to improve my English-speaking skills"), this finding aligns with a substantial body of ESP/EVP research. Sari and Wirza found that OTKP students (closely related to MPLB) needed speaking skills for workplace purposes, including functioning as secretaries, managers, and receptionists. Similarly, needs analysis in hospitality and office administration contexts consistently identifies speaking as the dominantly selected skill (Riswanto et al., 2022).

The high mean score on Q10 ("Speaking is the English skill I need most for work purposes,"  $M = 4.48$ ) demonstrates both recognition of the importance of speaking and awareness of personal learning gaps. This gap between perceived importance and current proficiency represents what Hutchinson and Waters termed "lacks," the difference between what learners can currently do and what they need to do in target situations (Yulia & Agustiani, 2019). Interview data provided rich qualitative support, with one student stating, *"If you cannot speak English well, you cannot do your job."*

The second finding reveals that listening is consistently ranked as the second most important skill ( $M = 4.63$  for Q7). This finding reflects students' understanding that effective workplace communication is bidirectional: one must not only speak but also comprehend instructions, questions, and feedback from colleagues, supervisors, and customers. The strong agreement with Q3 ("Listening skills are important for understanding workplace instructions,"  $M = 4.37$ ) and the listening improvement need ( $M = 4.63$ ) indicates that students recognize listening as a receptive skill that enables effective responses. This finding supports the integrated nature of oral communication in workplace settings, where speaking and listening are typically used in tandem rather than in isolation.

The third finding is that reading ( $M = 4.51$ ) and writing ( $M = 4.51$ ) received slightly lower but still high mean scores compared to speaking and listening. This finding may reflect several factors. First, students may perceive speaking and listening as more urgent because these skills are required for real-time, face-to-face interactions where there is no opportunity to consult dictionaries or revise responses. Second, students may feel more confident in their reading and writing abilities, having received more instruction in these areas throughout their previous education. Third, as suggested in the literature, students may believe that writing tasks in the workplace can be supported by templates and digital tools, whereas speaking requires immediate, unassisted performance. Implications for Practice: The English instruction in the MPLB program should allocate significantly more time to speaking and listening activities, including pronunciation practice, active listening

exercises, conversation simulations, and role plays. While reading and writing should not be neglected, they should be taught as supporting skills that reinforce oral communication.

The findings reveal that students prefer interactive and communicative learning activities over traditional, passive methods. The highest mean score for Q19 ("I prefer learning through group discussions and active communication,"  $M = 4.20$ ) aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT), which emphasize that language is best acquired through meaningful use. Role-play and workplace simulation activities (Q17,  $M = 3.95$ ) and project-based learning (Q20,  $M = 3.95$ ) also received strong endorsement. This finding is consistent with research by Wijnia, who found that project-based learning, simulations, and genre-based instruction improve vocational students' motivation and practical use of English (Wijnia et al., 2024). These activities allow students to simulate real workplace scenarios, such as greeting clients, handling phone inquiries, and participating in meetings, directly addressing their target communication needs (Sari & Wirza, 2021).

The positive attitude toward videos and audiovisual media (Q18,  $M = 3.91$ ) suggests that students are receptive to multimedia resources that provide authentic models of workplace communication. Video-based learning can expose students to realistic interactions, professional vocabulary, and appropriate nonverbal communication in workplace settings, thereby bridging the gap between classroom learning and authentic professional contexts.

While not directly measured, the pattern of preferences reveals an implied rejection of traditional grammar-focused instruction. The consistently high preferences for interactive, communicative activities, in contrast to the absence of strong preference for passive learning methods, suggest that students find traditional approaches less engaging. This finding challenges the persistence of grammar-translation methods in many Indonesian English classrooms. As Basturkmen noted, ESP instruction should focus on helping learners acquire specialized linguistic registers through meaningful communication rather than decontextualized grammar rules. Implications for Practice: English teachers should design lessons around group discussions, role plays, simulations, and project-based tasks that reflect authentic office management scenarios. Audiovisual media should be incorporated to provide authentic models of workplace communication (Nicolaou et al., 2019). Traditional grammar exercises should be minimized or integrated meaningfully into communicative tasks.

**Integration of Findings and Overall Implications** The three sets of findings present a coherent picture of MPLB students' English learning needs. Students want to learn English primarily for authentic workplace communication (RQ1). To achieve this, they prioritize speaking and listening skills (RQ2) and prefer to learn through interactive, collaborative, and simulation-based activities (RQ3). This alignment between target needs, skill priorities, and learning preferences suggests that students have a well-developed understanding of their own learning needs.

The high reliability coefficients across all dimensions (ranging from  $\alpha = 0.640$  to  $0.856$ ) confirm the questionnaire's internal consistency. The highest reliability was observed for expectations regarding English learning ( $\alpha = 0.856$ ), indicating that students hold strong, consistent expectations for workplace-relevant instruction. This finding reinforces the importance of aligning curriculum design with learner expectations.

**Limitations and Future Research:** While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to 75 students from a single

vocational program at one school, which may limit generalizability. Second, the study focused on student perceptions, which may not fully capture the objective communication demands of actual workplace environments. Future research should complement student needs analysis with input from employers, industry professionals, and English teachers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of vocational English needs.

This discussion confirms that MPLB students have clear, pragmatically oriented English learning needs centered on authentic workplace communication. They prioritize speaking and listening over reading and writing, and they strongly prefer interactive, communicative learning activities over traditional grammar-based instruction. These findings have direct implications for English curriculum design, material development, and instructional practice in vocational high schools. By aligning English instruction with students' identified needs and expectations, educators can enhance both motivation and learning outcomes, better preparing students for the communication demands of their future professional contexts.

## Conclusion

This needs analysis study investigated the English learning needs of 75 Grade X students in the Office Management and Business Services (MPLB) program at an Indonesian vocational high school. The findings reveal three key conclusions aligned with the research questions. Key Findings are First, students demonstrated strong target English communication needs centered on authentic workplace tasks, including customer communication, professional self-introduction, email writing, and work readiness ( $M = 4.51$ ). Second, students prioritized speaking ( $M = 4.81$ ) and listening ( $M = 4.63$ ) as the most critical language skills for workplace communication, while reading and writing received slightly lower prioritization. Third, students strongly preferred interactive and communicative learning activities, particularly group discussions and active communication ( $M = 4.20$ ), followed by role-plays, simulations, project-based learning, and audiovisual media. Practical Implications are that English teachers and curriculum developers should integrate vocationally relevant, authentic workplace tasks into instruction, with particular emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills through interactive activities such as simulations, role-plays, and group discussions. Traditional grammar-based instruction should be minimized. Schools should provide professional development for teachers in ESP methodologies and establish industry partnerships to ensure curriculum alignment with labor market demands. Future Research Recommendations: Future studies should expand the sample to multiple vocational schools and programs to enhance generalizability. Researchers should incorporate employer and industry perspectives to validate student-reported needs. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine whether needs-driven curricula produce measurable improvements in workplace English performance. Finally, experimental research comparing needs-based instruction with traditional approaches would provide causal evidence of effectiveness.

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